

Report to: Cabinet Member (Customer, Workforce and Legal Services)

24th January 2008

Report of: Acting Head of Human Resources

Title: Policy Development

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To present two revised Council policy documents.

Consultation has recently taken place with trade unions in respect of revisions to two Council policies:

- Travel and Reimbursement Scheme
- Leave of Absence for Special Purposes

The trade unions support the changes to these Policies.

2 Recommendations

2.1 That the revised policies are approved by the Cabinet Member (Customer, Workforce and Legal Service).

3 Information/Background

3.1 **Travel and Reimbursement Scheme.** The Travel and Reimbursement Scheme has been in place since 1999. The revisions reflect additional charges that employees may incur using their own vehicles on Council business, including Congestion Charges and Toll Road Charges. In addition, since the inception of the scheme the methods of reimbursing employees with necessary expenditure incurred during travel on Council business has changed. The document has been amended accordingly to take account of these changes.

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) give the Council exemption from completing an annual return showing personal expenditure reimbursed to employees, if the Council is able to provide to them a policy document that identifies the basis on which reimbursement for all aspects of expenditure is made. Therefore, unless or until the document is revised congestion charges and toll road charges will continue to need to be reported to HM Revenue and Customs on an annual basis to identify whether individual employees have

received exceptional taxable payments. Revising the scheme document will ensure minimum resource implications in complying with HMRC requirements.

Leave of Absence for Special Purposes. This document brings together a range of circumstances why employees may need time off for reasons other than those covered by the provision of annual leave. There is statutory entitlement to time off for some purposes, the Council also provides for discretionary time off. In certain circumstances there is provision for approved discretionary paid leave and in other circumstances discretion to approve unpaid leave. Time off for any discretionary leave of any kind is subject to approval by an HR Manager to ensure consistency and equality.

The document has been revised to include provision for discretionary unpaid leave for elective surgery. Elective surgery/medical procedures are becoming more available and there is a lack of clarity for employees about whether surgery of this nature is justifiably taken as sickness absence. If such procedures/surgery is reported as sickness absence it may, increasingly, contribute to the Council's sickness absence levels. Recovery periods in some circumstances can be substantial. Clearly defining the expectation for employees to pursue elective surgery during their own time, ie by taking annual leave or discretionary unpaid leave will ensure consistency and equity across the Council.

4 Proposal and Other Option(s) to be Considered

4.1 That the revised policies are approved to replace the existing published policies.

5 Other specific implications

5.1

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Neighbourhood Management		
Best Value		
Children and Young People		
Comparable Benchmark Data		
Corporate Parenting		
Coventry Community Plan		
Crime and Disorder		
Equal Opportunities	✓	
Finance	✓	
Health and Safety		
Human Resources	✓	
Human Rights Act		
Impact on Partner Organisations		
Information and Communications Technology		
Legal Implications	✓	
Property Implications		
Race Equality Scheme		

	Implications (See below)	No Implications
Risk Management		
Climate Change and Sustainable Development		
Trade Union Consultation	✓	
Voluntary Sector – The Coventry Compact		

4.2 Equal Opportunities. The policies support the council's equal opportunities policy. They ensure that employees are treated fairly and consistently.

4.3 Finance. The Travel and Reimbursement Scheme is compliant with the Council's Financial Regulations and Procedures. It ensures that the Council complies with the requirements of HMRC in respect of income tax payments for employees. The cost of absence for employees choosing to have elective medical procedures/surgery will be minimal.

4.4 Human Resources. The policies will ensure compliance with best practice Human Resources policies and processes in these areas.

4.5 Legal Implications. The policies will ensure compliance with relevant legislation or regulations.

4.6 Trade Union Consultation. Trade Unions have been fully consulted on the changes to these documents

6 Monitoring

6.1 These policies will be reviewed in accordance with relevant Council and statutory changes.

7 Timescale and expected outcomes

7.1 These policies will replace existing documents as soon as possible.

	Yes	No
Key Decision		✓
Scrutiny Consideration (if yes, which Scrutiny meeting and date)		✓
Council Consideration (if yes, date of Council meeting)		✓

List of background papers

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Papers open to Public Inspection:

Description of paper

Location

Travel and Reimbursement Scheme – Civic Centre 2

Time Off for Special Purposes – Civic Centre 2